

SUMMER SAFETY TIPS TO BEAT THE HEAT by John Mossa

The following information is from Toronto Public Health and the Emergency Medical Services (EMS): In the summer, the combination of high heat and humidity can be very dangerous.

People at risk during these weather conditions include:

- People with disabilities and/or people who have diabetes, heart and respiratory conditions
- The elderly
- Infants and preschool children
- People taking certain medications, for example, mental health conditions. For partial list of medications that may cause higher risk for heat-related illness please see http://www.toronto.ca/ems/safety_tips/hot_1.htm

Tips on how to avoid heat-related illness:

- Drinks lots of water and natural fruit juices even if you don't feel very thirsty.
- If you don't have air conditioning, keep drapes drawn and blinds closed on the sunny side of your home, but keep windows slightly open.
- Fans alone may not provide enough cooling when the temperature is high.
- Go to air conditioned or cool places such as shopping malls, libraries, community centres or a friend's place.
- Spend some time near the lake or waterfront where it is cooler.
- Wear loose fitting, light clothing.
- Keep lights off or turned down low.
- Take cool bath or shower periodically or cool down with cool, wet towels.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages, coffee and cola.
- Avoid going out in the blazing sun or heat when possible. If you must go outside, stay in the shade as much as possible and plan to go out early in the morning or evening when it is cooler & smog levels may not be as high in the afternoon. Wear a hat.
- Avoid heavy meals and using your oven.

- Avoid intense or moderately intense physical activity.
- Never leave a child in a parked car or asleep in direct sunlight.
- Consult your doctor or pharmacist regarding the side effects of your medications.

Summer Safety: Fan Facts

DO...

- Use your fan in or next to a window. Box fans are best.
- Use a fan to bring in the cooler air from outside.
- Use your fan by plugging it directly into the wall outlet. If you need an extension cord, it should be Canadian Standards Association approved.

DON'T...

- Use a fan in a closed room without windows or doors open to the outside.
- Believe that fans cool air. They don't. They just move the air around. Fans keep you cool by evaporating your sweat.
- Use a fan to blow extremely hot air on yourself. This can cause heat exhaustion to happen faster.

If you're afraid to open your window to use a fan, choose other ways to keep cool. See the other tips listed above.

Get help from a friend, relative or doctor if you have these symptoms of heat illness:

- Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing
- Weakness, dizziness or fainting
- More tiredness than usual
- Headache
- Confusion
- Nausea

Friends and relatives can help someone with heat illness by doing the following:

- Call for help
- Remove extra clothing from the person
- Cool the person with lukewarm water, by sponging or bathing
- Move the person to a cooler location
- Give the person sips of cool water not ice cold water

Even a few hours in cooler environment during extremely hot weather lowers the core body temperature and helps save lives.

Hot Weather Warnings for Toronto

Toronto's hot weather response plan coordinates the efforts of City of Toronto and community agencies to prevent illness during periods of extreme hot weather.

When hot weather becomes oppressive due to high temperatures and other factors, the Medical Officer of Health issues a **heat alert**. It may be upgraded to an **extreme heat alert**.

A **Heat Alert** means that the conditions brought on by a hot air mass are such that the likelihood of additional deaths, above those that are typical for the same time of year, is more than 65 percent. In an **Extreme Heat Alert**, the figure is more than 90 percent.

Help for you when you need it

When a Heat Alert or Extreme Heat Alert is issued by the City's Medical Officer of Health, the Toronto EMS Community Medicine Program has specially trained paramedics available to visit you in your home on a non-emergency basis to:

- Provide you with a personal medical assessment to identify any risk(s) to your health caused by extremely hot weather.
- Use specialized equipment to determine if the temperature or temperature-related conditions inside your home cause risk to your health.

- Provide you with personal instruction on how you can cool down yourself and your home in a safe, effective manner.
- When necessary, provide you with transportation to a location where you can cool down for a couple of hours and give your body some relief from the effects of extremely hot weather.

If you feel ill, faint, have difficulty breathing or feel disoriented visit your doctor or nearest hospital.

In an emergency call 911

For more information about the health effects of extreme heat call **Canadian Red Cross Heat Info Hotline 416-480-2615**. During heat alert and extreme heat periods ask for a free heat-health risk evaluation of your home by the EMS Community Medicine Team.

For more information on how to prepare for summer call **Toronto Health Connection 416-338-7600** or visit www.toronto.ca/health